

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA PRIORITY

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TAGS: CD, SHUM,

SUBJECT: TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE ON YONDO

HERE IS COMPLETE TEXT OF NOV. 18 TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE  
ENTITLED "DEATH AND YONDO":

A BLACK EVANGELIST WAS SEWED UP INSIDE A TOM-TOM AND STARVED  
TO DEATH WHILE DRUMMERS POUNDED INCESSANTLY ON THE SKIN TOP.  
THE BODIES OF SEVERAL OTHER CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN FOUND  
BURIED UP TO THEIR NECKS IN SAND, THEIR HEADS SWARMING WITH  
ANTS. ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, MORE THAN 130 NATIVE PRO-  
TESTANT PASTORS AND LAY CHURCH LEADERS HAVE BEEN ASSASSI-  
NATED IN THE LANDLOCKED AFRICAN REPUBLIC OF CHAD SINCE LAST  
NOVEMBER.

THE TALES OF DEATH AND TORTURE REFLECT THE GRISLY TURN THAT  
PRESIDENT NGARTI TOMBALBAYE'S "CULTURAL REVOLUTION" HAS  
TAKEN SINCE ITS INAUGURATION IN AUGUST 1973. WHEN FIRST  
ANNOUNCED, TOMBALBAYE'S POLICY OF "CHADITUDE" SEEMED TO BE  
JUST ANOTHER OF THE AUTHENTICITY CAMPAIGNS THAT HAVE BECOME  
A FAMILIAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE PHENOMENON IN AFRICA'S NEWLY  
INDEPENDENT BLACK STATES. TO FOSTER A SENSE OF NATIONAL  
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PRIDE AND IDENTITY, TOMBALBAYE ORDERED THE 4 MILLION

CITIZENS OF THE FORMER FRENCH COLONY TO CHANGE THEIR FOREIGN FIRST NAMES. CITY AND STREET NAMES (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CAPITAL'S MAIN THOROUGHFARE, AVENUE CHARLES DE GAULLE) WERE ALSO AFRICANIZED. THE CAPITAL, FORT LAMY, WAS RENAMED NDJAMENA, WHICH MEANS ROUGHLY "LEAVE US ALONE."

THE REFORMS STIRRED LITTLE CONTROVERSY UNTIL TOMBALBAYE ORDERED THE REVIVAL OF AN ANCIENT PAGAN TRIBAL CUSTOM KNOWN AS YONDO, A GRUELING INITIATION RITE PRACTICED BY THE SARA TRIBAL GROUPS OF SOUTHERN CHAD. THE ORDEAL -- TOMBALBAYE HIMSELF UNDERWENT IT AS AN ADOLESCENT -- IS KNOWN TO INVOLVE FLOGGINGS, FACIAL SCARRING, MOCK BURIALS, DRUGGING, AND INGENUOUSLY GRUESOME TESTS OF STAMINA, LIKE CRAWLING NAKED THROUGH A NEST OF TERMITES. TRIBESMEN WHO HAVE BEEN RAISED IN THE BUSH DO NOT ALWAYS SURVIVE THE RITUAL, WHICH SUGGESTED THAT IT IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR URBANIZED CHADIANS TO ENDURE. WHEN TOMBALBAYE DECREED THAT HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, BE AMONG THE FIRST GROUP OF INITIATES, THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ARGUED THAT THE TWO-MONTH PROGRAM WOULD INTERFERE WITH HIS EFFORTS TO INCREASE FARM PRODUCTION IN THE DROUGHT-STRICKEN COUNTRY. THE EDUCATION MINISTER ALSO OBJECTED THAT THE INITIATION OF TEACHERS WOULD INTERRUPT SCHOOLING. A SEVEN-MONTH DELAY WAS GRANTED BUT THIS JULY A THOUSAND CHADIAN OFFICIALS WERE SENT SOUTH TO YONDO CAMPS.

NEW PEOPLE. WHEN THE FIRST INITIATES BEGAN RETURNING TO THE CAPITAL LAST MONTH, THEY REFUSED TO ANSWER GREETINGS FROM OLD FRIENDS; ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION OF YONDO, THEY ARE NOW NEW PEOPLE TOTALLY DIVORCED FROM THEIR PAST. THE FATE OF MANY WHO HAVE NOT RETURNED IS STILL UNKNOWN. SOME ARE REPORTEDLY BEING HELD FOR FURTHER INDOCTRINATION. OTHERS MAY BE DEAD. SEVERAL WHO TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM THE CAMPS WERE FOUND BURIED WITH THEIR HEADS OR LIMBS LEFT EXPOSED AS GROTESQUE REMINDERS OF THE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR RESISTING TOMBALBAYE'S DECREE.

ALTHOUGH CHAD'S 52 PER CENT MUSLIM MAJORITY, AS WELL AS ITS 5 PER CENT CHRISTIAN MINORITY, CONDEMN THE PAGAN RITES, NO UNCLASSIFIED

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EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN ORGANIZED. A SECRET MEETING OF CHAD'S CHURCH LEADERS WAS HELD IN AUGUST. SO FAR, THEY HAVE NOT DARED TO SPEAK OUT FOR FEAR OF REPRISAL: THE 130 ASSASSINATED CHURCHMEN WERE APPARENTLY KILLED FOR PREACHING AGAINST THE RITES. UNTIL THE DICTATORIAL TOMBALBAYE CAN BE PERSUADED TO SOFTEN HIS DRASTIC DECREE, MANY CHADIANS WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN POSSIBLE DEATH FROM UNDERGOING YONDO AND CERTAIN DEATH FOR RESISTING IT. KISSINGER

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